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NISGA'A LAND CLAIM NEGOTIATIONS



A joint publication of the Government of Canada,
the Province of British Columbia
and the Nisga'a Tribal Council

January 1992

It was an historic occasion. On March 20, 1991, the Nisga'a people and the federal and provincial governments signed a Framework Agreement, the first step along the path of negotiation. Now they sit together at the negotiating table to sort out issues of ownership and use of resources and land in the Nass Valley. Talks are under way to solve age-old uncertainties and grievances. There is hope for a new era of stability and prosperity.

The goal is to find a solution that brings certainty and so benefits everyone.



- The Nisga'a people will benefit as they gain increased control over their lives and the means to preserve and enhance their culture.
- The provincial and federal governments benefit as increased responsibility for current programs shifts to the Nisga'a people. With cooperation, legal costs and court cases diminish, allowing all three parties to get on with building a better province and country for all.
- Business benefits when "the rules of the game" are clear. Confidence rises as Nisga'a and non-native companies cooperate in developing commercial projects.
- All within the province benefit as the Nisga'a people become full and active partners in the social, economic and cultural life of British Columbia.

It is time to settle the issue.

A land claims agreement will bring new opportunities.

The cost of not settling is too high. Legal costs, lost possibilities for development, reduction of the confidence of possible investors in B.C. and the loss of opportunities for the Nisga'a people to assume their place as equal and active citizens of the province are too great a price to pay for further delay.

Negotiations must proceed. New models that define with certainty how the Nisga'a people and other British Columbian citizens will co-exist on the same land must be developed.

UNDER NEGOTIATION

This map marks the boundaries asserted by the Nisga'a people as their traditional territory.

Negotiations will address a broad range of issues, including:

- Land
- Renewable and Non-renewable Resources
- Environmental Issues
- Cultural Artifacts and Heritage
- Economic Development
- Nisga'a Government
- Compensation
- Direct and Indirect Taxation

Though the negotiations will be complex and difficult, all three parties want an equitable and workable agreement, fair to everyone.

IN THE MEANTIME

Existing development will continue while negotiations proceed. The Nisga'a and the federal and provincial governments are looking for new ideas and approaches that balance and protect the interests of both the Nisga'a people and other resource users over the long term.

COMMON UNDERSTANDING

Keeping with the long-standing position of the Nisga'a nation, existing private homes are not on the table for negotiation and will not be threatened by a land claims agreement.

Further, the Nisga'a people emphasize they are negotiating the basis for their economic, social and cultural survival *within* Canada. The Nisga'a people want to be full and active partners within Confederation.



THE PROCESS

The process of achieving final agreement involves three steps.

The first has already been taken with the signing of the Framework Agreement. This initial agreement sets the ground rules for how negotiations will be conducted; what topics will be discussed; and provides for continuing access to government programs and services.

The second step – an agreement in principle – is only 15 months away. By that time, all three parties hope to have reached essential agreement on all major points. Monthly negotiating meetings keep the process moving and demonstrate the commitment of each party to arriving at this second major milestone on schedule.

This agreement in principle is then submitted for review and approval by the federal and provincial governments and the Nisga'a communities.

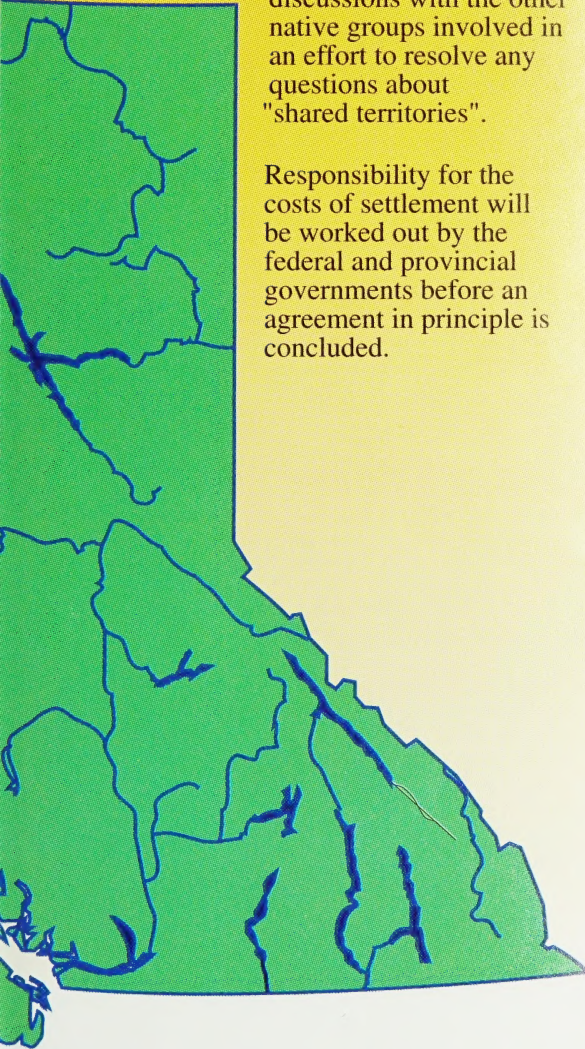
A final agreement will be concluded as quickly as possible after that second stage is reached.

Negotiations are being conducted by the Nisga'a Tribal Council on behalf of the Nisga'a nation. The Nisga'a negotiating team is led by their President. The provincial and federal negotiating teams are led by senior officials, supported by advisers from various ministries and departments.

OTHER ISSUES

Some land and resources under negotiation have traditionally been shared by the Nisga'a and other native groups. The Nisga'a have initiated discussions with the other native groups involved in an effort to resolve any questions about "shared territories".

Responsibility for the costs of settlement will be worked out by the federal and provincial governments before an agreement in principle is concluded.



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The negotiation of a solution to this long-outstanding land question in British Columbia is an important issue for all citizens.

The public will be involved in at least two ways.

You, the members of the general public, must be informed. The Nisga'a people and the federal and provincial governments have formed a special working group to help you keep up-to-date on negotiations and background issues. The three parties are working together to produce information materials. As well, meetings with individuals, organizations and groups will encourage the widest possible discussion and give the parties the opportunity to hear the public's views.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like additional information concerning the negotiation of the Nisga'a land question, please write:

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